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English Language Learning and Teaching in the Digitization Era

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THE USE OF FACEBOOK AS AN ALTERNATIVE MEDIA IN LEARNING ENGLISH

Atik Rokhayani

ABSTRACT

The use of online modes is becoming a tremendous activity in teaching and learning English nowadays, however social networking can also be an effective tool. It is not only easy to use but also helps encourage an autonomous learning within a social environment for students. Facebook is currently the most popular platform for online social networking among university students. It can create motivation and increase students' social relationships outside of the classroom. One of the interesting activities many young people do is commenting each other on their friends' statuses and pictures. This paper discusses the use of Facebook as a useful online environment that could support, enhance or strengthen their motivation in learning English language. The data are collected from a English Education Department students, Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Muria Kudus University using a questionnaire method. After presenting a descriptive analysis of the data, I conclude that students believe Facebook could be utitized as an alternative media in learning English.

Keywords: Facebook, language learning

INTRODUCTION

Living in traditional and globalization era is different. Traditionally, language learning involved a teacher and a student or students being in the same physical space. However, the development of high-speed Internet access has helped to bring about new virtual learning environments in which students can learn even when they are literally thousands of miles away from a teacher or other classmates. The condition of both real and virtual learning environments are the same. Students still need to be motivated. Virtual learning is significantly different from face to face classes for a number of reasons (Harmer, 2007). It has online tutors who interact with their students. Online learning may have the advantages, but some of the benefits of real learning environments are less easy to replicate electronically. In other cases, some of the students prefer to use online media.

In this era of globalization, computer-based technology is playing such an important role in language learning and teaching that a new mode of language learning Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is currently in practice. A definition of CALL that accommodates its changing nature is any process in which a learner uses a computer and, as a result, improves his or her language (Beatty, 2003). Change is also occurring with advances in computer literacy among both teachers and learners. However, many people of this era are concerned about the impact of communication technologies on language. It is hard to ignore the roles of communication technologies in foreign language learning. CALL is employed in many ways, both in and out of the classroom. It is promoted as a complete method of learning a language when it is used by individual away from the home. In classroom it can be used both as a reward for better learners or a remedial tool.

There are numerous technology tools which can be integrated into the classroom and used outside class, such as chat, email, blogging, microblogging and social networking. Social networking has increased in popularity in recent years and sites such as MySpace, Twitter and Facebook can be a very useful tool in the classroom as they promote both target language use while also promoting learner autonomy among language students. Holec (1981) defined autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning". In addition, for those students who wish to continue learning the most important thing we can tell them is they should stay in contact with English (Harmer, 2001).

PURPOSE

This paper is to explore the use of Facebook as an alternative media and to motivate students in learning English.

FACEBOOK

Introducing social networking sites such as Twitter or Facebook can help students increase their own language learning in a fun and motivating way. Twitter can link video, television or polls; however these require separate applications. FB on the other hand can help keep topics grouped together in one place, which is easier for students to read and they have more control over the length of their posts. Facebook is not only for socializing. They can attach links, share photos and videos, send private messages, add notes or easily chat online synchronously. According to facebook.com there are currently approximately 800 million active users worldwide in over 70 languages and with more than 350 million users accessing FB on their mobile devices. In other words, FB is an extremely convenient application that students and educators can access anywhere. Not all students have access to a computer or internet at home and by having mobile access to Facebook; students are able to access their accounts anywhere.

There are many terms found in Facebook. They are News Feed, Friends Online, What's on your mind?, Share, Like, Tag this Photo etc.

- News Feed: This is the place where your friend's activity appears
- Friends Online: Current available friends (to chat with)
- What's on your mind: This is a question Facebook asks to encourage you to put what are you thinking or doing
- Share: When you want to give something, without expecting anything in return, you are sharing
- Like: If you like a picture, video or comment, you can click on Like
- Tag this Photo: to id someone by putting a tag or label on a photo

In a conceptual paper, Blattner and Fiori (2009) discuss and examine how Facebook can provide opportunities to enhance the development of socio pragmatic competence in language learner and the sense of community in language classroom. In addition, they also point out that Facebook can be utilized for authentic language interaction, and can be used to increase motivation and improve the performance of English language learners. From the explanation above, we can conclude that Facebook can be used as one of the media in learning English.

STUDENTS MOTIVATION

Motivation is a state of cognitive arousal which provokes a decision to act as a result of which there is sustained intellectual and /or physical effort so that the person can achieve some previously set goal (Williams and Burden: 1997). They go on to point out that the strength of that motivation will depend on how much value the individual places on the outcome he or she wishes to achieve. Furthermore, Harmer (2001) suggests several sources of motivation:

- The society we live in: outside any classroom there are attitude to language learning and the English language in particular.
- Significant others: apart from the culture of the world around students, their attitude to language learning.
- The teacher: clearly a major factor in the continuance of a student's motivation.
- The method: it is vital that both teacher and students have some confidence in the way teaching and learning take place.

According to Weller (2005) define that there are five basic principles of motivation exist that are applicable to learning in any situation:

- The environment can be used to focus the student's attention on what needs to be learned.
- Incentives motivate learning.
- Internal motivation is longer lasting and more self-directive than is external motivation, which must be repeatedly reinforced by praise or concrete rewards.
- Learning is most effective when an individual is ready to learn, that is, when one wants to know something.
- Motivation is enhanced by the way in which the instructional material is organized.

None of the techniques will produce sustained motivation unless the goals are realistic for the learner. The basic learning principle involved is that success is more predictably motivating than is failure. Ordinarily, people will choose activities of intermediate uncertainty rather than those that are difficult (little likelihood of success) or easy (high probability of success).

DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

In this research, I use descriptive method because it investigates the existing phenomena that occur naturally. Descriptive research uses a number of techniques to specify, study, or describe the phenomena without the researcher's manipulation. It also doesn't use any statistical/numerical data.

PARTICIPANTS

The population of this study is 222. In this research I used 50 as the sample consisting of 21 male and 29 female. All of them are the fifth students of English Education Department, Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Muria Kudus University. I chose them randomly. They are 18 to 23 years of age. They have been learning English for 2 years in the university.

DATA COLLECTION

Given the nature of the sample, I chose the questionnaire method to collect the data because it was particularly useful for them. In the questionnaire, I provided specific questions with a narrow range of possibilities. The participants responded to each question by checking "yes" "no" or "other" and giving reason/comment. They have to answer 10 questions. They completed the questionnaire during class time.

RESULT

From the result of the questionnaire, 50 participants are frequently log on to Facebook.

- a. 39 participants change default language into English while 11 participants don't change default language into English. It means that they are still using Bahasa Indonesia in their Facebook account.
- 44 participants like to write posts and comments in English. 6 participants don't like to write posts and comments in English.
- c. 46 participants connect with English-speaking friends while 4 others never do it.
- d. 42 participants join in English group because they think that they will get many information from group.
- e. 44 participants greet their friends informally when they write on wall, send messages, or chat with their friends. Many of them consider that Facebook can be used informally.
- f. 43 participants use grammatically correct sentence when they chat or write on Facebook.
- g. 47 participants are willing to learn new words, expression, or symbols used by other FB users in order to save the time.
- h. 47 out of 50 participants think that Facebook can improve their English skill.
- i. 48 out of 50 think that Facebook can motivate them in learning English.

DISCUSSION

The activities that the people do in Facebook are very interesting. It is proven by the participants who did the questionnaire. They show that they frequently log on to Facebook. Most of them think that Facebook can improve their English skills because according to them writing posts and comments in English make them able to develop English skills because they will find many new vocabularies that can improve the capability in constructing sentences. In addition by posting things that are happening to you that are important, funny, interesting, etc. Then, your friends can respond back to you and you can have a conversation. Having a conversation on Facebook is nice because you can see the entire conversation and multiple people can join in the fun.

The language used in Facebook is virtual communication. We cannot categorize as either a spoken or a written language of a new genre. The new way of using language among young people use Facebook is a creative and random use of writing words with symbols, abbreviation, arronym, emoticons, capitals and others. So, many of them use informal language in greeting each

One of the most common problems of English Education students in Muria Kudus University is that they have trouble meeting native English speakers outside of class. So, Facebook be used to overcome the problems. They can chat with native speakers and give comments to each other. I'm sure many people are interested in many things: sports, music, fashion, famous people, news events, and more. Facebook has thousands of group pages, and joining a group helps keep track of your interests, connects you with people who share your interests, and gives you less of opportunities to practice English.

A cognitive view of motivation include factors such as the need for exploration, activity, stimulation, new knowledge, and ego enhancement (Brown, 2000). There are many activities to motivate students in learning English. Facebook can be used as one of them. The participants in the questionnaires agree that Facebook can motivate them in learning English.

CONCLUSION

There are many media can be used in learning English, among others are picture, real thing, video, etc. Nowadays, Facebook is very popular among young people especially university students. It is not a new thing for them. They are not only having fun with Facebook but it also they can learn English language. It was observed that following the incorporation of the Facebook activity, many of the more introverted students became more motivated in learning English and were actually talking more in English. It was also noticed that students began to express more opinions and give extended reasoning in not only their face-to-face interactions but also in their written language. While it is impossible to say that social networking was the reason for these differences, it can be said that it possibly played a role and these types of activities do show promise as they appear to give students choices and opportunities to have control over their own learning. These kinds of opportunities and environments may create conditions for facilitating the development of learner autonomy.

On the other hand, the use of social networking such as Facebook has many effects. It can be positive and negative. For the positive effect, Facebook can be used as a media in learning English because in Facebook, people can write posts and comments in English that can motivate them in improving English skills. Furthermore, they will get new words and expressions in Facebook. While, in negative effect making the students use their time in Facebook. They spend much time in Facebook. However, when it comes to learning English, the negative effects of using Facebook outweigh the positive ones. Whether websites like Facebook dwarf the potentials of the learners of English or open new vistas of possibilities triggers many questions in researchers' minds. We surely need to wait to see where the new communication technologies take us.

SUGGESTION

The results of this discussion imply the following suggestions. First, the students can use Facebook optimally by connecting to other English learners through joining groups and pages. They also can write posts and comments in English that can improve their English skills. In addition, connecting and reconnecting to English speaking friends is a good way to motivate students in learning English. Second, for teachers can use Facebook as an alternative media in teaching English. The use of a social network site appeared to motivate learners to participate and take charge of online discussions. Finally, clearly further research is needed involving a more systematic analysis of the data, however, initial observations indicate that the use of Facebook contributed to increased student motivation and language output.

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